

# The LAY-MONK.

*Vitiis nemo sine nascitur, optimus ille  
Qui minimis urgetur.* Hor.

From MONDAY, February 1. to WEDNESDAY, February 3. 1713.

I intend in this Paper to conclude what I have to offer to the Publick on the Effects of the *Spleen* in our Bodies, and its wonderful Influence on the Mind. As I owe these Remarks chiefly to Dr. LACON's Conversation, I have already observ'd that the Ferment which the Physicians call the *Spleen*, while its Government is limited to a moderate Superiority, is not a Distemper, but in reality a generous Principle, which gives that Acuteness of Thought, Vivacity of Imagination and Abundance of Spirit, that exalts the Posseffor above the Level of Mankind. From this active Spring, as it is differently mixt and modify'd by Combinations of other Humours, arises in this Island, where it so much prevails, that great Variety of Men of Sense and Wit, who have however such an original Dissimilitude to each other as cannot but surprize the Observer. Nor is the *Spleen* less concern'd in constituting the numerous Characters which are found in the moral World, where Virtue and Vice take a different Turn, and acquire distinct Properties and Appearances, as this Leaven has more or less the Balance in the Complexion.

The Philosophers and Divines, who have compil'd Systems of Ethics, describe Virtues in their greatest Height and Perfection, and delineate their Ideas as existing in their own Imagination, pure and refin'd from all Stains of the opposite Vices; like those Painters and Sculptors, who sometimes by the Strength of Fancy represent more beautiful Faces than any which are form'd by Nature; such

were always esteem'd the *Venus* of *Apelles*, and that of *Cleomenes*.

But the Epick, Tragick and Comick Poets, as well as the Prose-Writers of Characters, exhibit Virtue and Vice mingled and blended as they find them really existing in Mankind, where they appear in different Shapes and Distinctions according to the different Proportions in their Mixture.

No Man is adorn'd with Virtue so refin'd and spotless, that it is not debas'd and sullied by any impure Allay; nor have any acquir'd that supreme Degree of Vice which excludes all good Inclinations, and entirely extinguishes the Sense of moral Evil. Should we therefore abstract from Men of the highest Clas, who approach the nearest to Perfection, all their Excellence and Virtue, and draw their Characters only by their Faults and Follies, they would appear odious or ridiculous. On the other hand, should we separate all their evil Ingredients from the worst of Men, and represent them by their good Qualities only, they would seem regular and amiable, or at least not deform'd.

Tho' various Specifick Natures are requir'd to distinguish one Order of Animals from another, yet in Morality the different Degree of Virtue and Vice, as one or the other is superior in the Mind, is sufficient to constitute and denominate a good or a bad Man. From this predominant Degree the Line is drawn that limits the two opposite Species, and divides the moral World into halves, where the People of each Hemisphere are diversify'd by the various good and bad Qualities, which meet together

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together in their Temperament. 'Tis easy to discriminate by the conspicuous heroick Vertues of the one, and the prodigious Wickedness of the other, the best and the worst of our Race; but the lowest Rank of the *virtuous*, and the highest of ill Men, as well as the numerous intermediate Species of each Kind, have so great a Resemblance and Affinity to each other, that 'tis very difficult to settle their Distinctions.

As the several Combinations of Madness, Spleen and Folly produce an infinite Variety of irregular Understandings, as has been observ'd in a former Discourse, so the amicable Accommodation and Alliance between several Vertues and Vices produce an equal Diversity in the Dispositions and Manners of Mankind; whence it comes to pass that as many monstrous and absurd Productions are found in the moral as in the intellectual World. How surprizing is it to observe among the least culpable Men, some whose Minds at the same time are attracted by Heaven and Earth with a seeming equal Force? Some who are proud in Humility, others who are censorious and uncharitable, yet self-denying and devout? Some who join Contempt of the World with sordid Avarice, and others who preserve a great Degree of Piety with Ill-nature and ungovern'd Passions? Nor are Instances of this inconsistant Mixture less frequent among bad Men, where we often with Admiration see Persons at once generous and unjust; *impious* Lovers of their Country, and *flagitious* Heroes; *good-natur'd* Sharpers, *immoral* Men of Honour, and Libertines who will sooner die than change their Religion. And tho' 'tis true that repugnant Coalitions of so high a Degree are found but in a Part of Mankind, yet none of the whole Mass either good or bad are entirely exempted from some absurd Mixtures.

Vertue never makes a more bright and amiable Appearance, than when 'tis introduc'd into a Complexion, where the Humours of the Body are so perfectly blended, and the conflicting Ferments, especially the Spleen, so well balanc'd, that the Possessor is by that happy Temperament dispos'd to Industry, Benevolence and Serenity of Mind. By this fine Nature resulting from their original Constitution, Children become a Soil prepar'd to receive the Seeds of Vertue; which cultivated by good Education, come forward a-pace, bear early Blossoms, and soon rise to great Perfection. Tho' these are rang'd in the highest Clas of excellent Men, yet their Mixture is faulty and imperfect: That gentle, humane and complaisant Temper, which disposes them to Goodness, not being accompany'd by a sufficient Portion of Fortitude, not only makes them unapt for brave and hazardous Attempts, but exposes them to unwarrantable Compliances, by which they may gain the Favour of ill Men; whence their Vertue receives many Blemishes.

Others have a noble Fire, that pushes them on to great Undertakings and Acts of Heroick Vertue, in defending their Country, and promoting the Happiness of Mankind. But it must be acknowledg'd, that the same warmth of Temper exposes them often to passionate Resentments, rash Expressions, and indiscreet Actions. The World is high-

ly indebted to this active Complexion, that proceeds from a due Coalition of Spleen and refin'd Choler, which is requir'd to form the Patriot and the Hero; and 'tis reasonable we should forgive their Faults and Irregularities, since these spring from the same generous Principle, that makes them the Benefactors of Mankind, and the Glory of their Country: Were it not for their extraordinary Merit, they would be liable to fewer Errors.

The Men of Vertue first describ'd, by the Sweetness of their Disposition, the Government of their Passions, and their great Humanity, have an undisturb'd Possession of themselves, and provide best for their own Peace and Felicity; but the brave and active Individuals of the last Sort, who neglect their private Interest, and for the Good of others, engage in the most dangerous Enterprizes, notwithstanding their Imperfections, are the most beneficial to Mankind; and this is the mix'd Character of the greatest Spirits in all Ages, not only of Pagan, but of Christian Heros, whose generous, and sometimes ungovernable Fire, has been the Cause of their illustrious Actions. The first save themselves, but the last their Country; one is freer from Defects, but the other has more Beauties.

Another inferior Clas of vertuous Men is constituted, when a prevailing degree of Piety is infus'd into a Complexion, where Flegm, Spleen and Melancholy are united; whence results an uneasy, sow'r and morose Disposition: In these, tho' Piety is indeed predominant, yet it is so rough, querulous and ill-manner'd, that it makes an unlovely and disagreeable, if not a forbidding Appearance. It is surprizing to find a Man of Vertue, either always sad and tormented with Scruples, or supercilious, fullen and censorious; to see Piety mixt with Malevolence and Singularity, rude Sanctity, and ~~discontented and desponding~~ Goodness. Tho' a prevalent Degree of Vertue gives them the Denomination of good Men, yet they cannot be reckon'd as Members of the first Rank by any but themselves.

The next Clas is of those where the Spleen has inordinate Dominion, who are therefore wavering and irresolute, and always halting between Vice and Vertue. From the Fluctuation of their Temper they divide their Time by reciprocal Returns of Sinning and Repenting, and spend all the Periods of Life in making and breaking good Resolutions. These approach so near to the Frontier of bad Men, that 'tis difficult to determine to which moral Species they belong. 'Tis certain that if their Vertue in this doubtful State is superior, yet the Distinction is so nice and hard to be discern'd, that the Possessors cannot certainly observe it; and therefore can reap no Satisfaction from the Consciousness of their Vertue here, or the Expectation of its Reward hereafter. It must be an eminent Degree of Goodness that by the Review of it can fill the Mind with Joy and Satisfaction. Weak and unequal Piety must leave a Man in constant Suspence about his Safety, while he still continues balancing and undetermin'd whether his good or bad Actions, his Vertues or Vices have the Ascendant.

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